



THE FIRING LINE

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE RIVER FALLS SPORTSMEN'S CLUB

DECEMBER, 2024

THIS ISSUE:

New members listed

Member Ron Wilson passes

Board brainstorms ideas for future projects

2024

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'Hero' 12-year-old saves dad from bear mauling

Five weeks after Sportsmen's Club member Ryan Beierman and 12-year-old son Owen made international headlines with their near-death black bear encounter, Owen -- a member of the River Falls Trap Team -- was recognized for his bravery and lauded as a hero.

At a public ceremony in Grantsburg on Saturday, Oct. 19th, Owen received a "Hero Award" from Burnett County Sheriff Tracy Finch for his cool-headed action when his dad was being attacked by a wounded bear.

Finch characterized the story this way:

On Sept. 7th, Owen went on what was to be believed to be a normal hunt, excited to spend some time with his father and to hopefully harvest a bear. Once a shot was taken, the father-son duo started tracking and that is when things changed. The bear charged and took down Owen's dad and he was severely injured.

"In law enforcement, we have to change and make decisions in a blink of an eye. Owen saw a traumatic and dangerous situation unfold in front of him.

"Most people would freeze, panic or even pass out in the face of danger. Owen was awarded this



Sheriff Tracy Finch presents Owen Beierman with a 'Hero' award for saving his dad, Ryan.

hero award because he is clearly built differently. He calmly cleared a weapon malfunction, took proper aim, and shot at the bear saving his father's life.

"We train for situations, malfunctions and stress; however, this shows that even though Owen is 12 years old when this happened, he has ice water in his veins and love in his heart. Owen, you are truly a hero, and The Burnett County Sheriff's Office sees great things in

your future!" she said.

What follows is an account of the incident told by Ryan to reporter Neal Griffin at the *InterCounty Leader* (Frederic) newspaper:

On Saturday, Sept. 7, Ryan and Owen drove from their River Falls home to the family cabin in Burnett County for what would be another big game hunting experience. After a two or three year wait, Ryan had secured a bear permit, and the season was officially open. The trip was nothing new for either of the Beiermans. Ryan is an avid hunter, and Owen has been hunting since he was seven years old. On hunting trips with his father, Owen has taken several deer and was successful on a bear hunt three years ago.

The two had been in a bear stand for about three hours when Owen saw a black bear approach from the north. Owen took a well-aimed shot a hit the bear, but the animal spun and ran back into the wooded area. With the help of some of their neighbors, Ryan and Owen completed a grid search but couldn't pick up a blood trail or find the bear. It wasn't until nearly 8 pm with the help of a neighbor's tracking dog that the wounded bear was located.

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Jan. 4th annual meet agenda includes proposal to increase dues

This year's annual membership meeting will be held at 1 pm, Saturday, Jan. 4, 2025 at the River Falls Moose Lodge #594, 620 N. Clark St.

Doors open at 11 am for membership renewal, complimentary hor d'oeuvres will be provided.

Members are reminded to bring along their old gate key, an honest summary of volunteer hours worked over the past year, and proof of NRA membership. (NRA card, or mailing label from a recent copy of American Hunter, American Rifleman, or Shooting Illustrated.)

Membership costs for 2025 remain the same: Adult - \$150 or \$75 with four completed volunteer hours, Family - \$210 or \$105 with four completed volunteer hours, and Junior are \$25.

For renewing members who are staying for the meeting part receive a raffle ticket for a chance to win a

gun. There will be other raffles for both guns and other shooting related items as well. All drawings occur at the conclusion of the meeting and winners must be present to win.

Tickets will also be available that day for a new RFSC fundraising gun raffle. We will be giving away 12 higher valued guns with cost of \$50 per ticket and a limit of 500 tickets being sold. This raffle will be in place of an annual RFSC banquet in 2025.

New clothing items and mugs with the new River Falls Sportsmen's Club logo will also be available for purchase.

Annual meeting will begin at 1 pm. Per by-laws, the agenda will include elections for the positions of club president, treasurer, club manager, chief instructor, and one director (a two-year post now being completed by Rachel Vogt).

Members can nominate themselves or any member in good standing.

Also on the agenda will be discussion and a membership vote on a board recommendation to increase membership dues, effective in 2026.

According to treasurer Ben Gaus, the annual membership dues are supposed to cover basic annual operating costs and upkeep for the club. Since COVID most all of the basic operating expenses for the club have increased to the point where the current membership dues are barely covering them and may fall short going forward.

The proposed increases are to increase an Individual from \$75 to \$90 (\$150 to \$180 without 4 hours of work), Family from \$105 to \$135 (\$210 to \$270 without 4 hours of work), and Junior from \$25 to \$30.

A postcard reminder will be mailed to all voting members prior to the meeting.

Urge a senior to apply for the RFSC scholarship

It's not yet Christmas, but high school graduation will be here before you know it.

Is there anyone in your circle -- kids, grandchildren, a neighbor's teen -- who might be eligible?

It's a generous scholarship, intended to incentivize an appreciation for our Second Amendment, the right to bear arms. Applications are available in the clubhouse. Please share the application if there's someone you know who might benefit.

Please welcome these new RFSC members!

William Reisner, Chuck Riley, Greg Fuchs, Scott Greshner, Nick Score, James & Bridget Burgess, and John Brunke.

(September)

Jesse Schnuckle, Pauline Goerdt, Chris Rowe, James Meredith and John Mickish.

(October)

Dimitri Von Ruckeat

(November)

Upcoming

- Winter Trap League begins from 11 am to 3 pm, Sunday, Jan. 5th, running 10 weeks, through March 24th (including expectation of two weather cancellations). First practice session for Summer Trap will be April 15th. No shooting if temp is 0 degrees or below at 11 am, but clubhouse will be open for renewals and socializing.
- 2025 Summer trap hours 5-9 pm, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and Sundays from 11-3 pm. Two practice weeks, April 15th and April 22nd. First official week of league starts April 29th, 2025.
- Regular board meetings begin at 7 pm, the second Monday of each month.

Shane Hoff contact info

An article in last quarter's newsletter spotlighted member Shane Hoff's skills as a shooting coach for beginners or experienced gun enthusiasts interested in improving some aspect of their game.

Hoff can be reached via e-mail: theamendmentllc@gmail.com, or by phone or text to (406)546-7833.

Newsletter

Comments, tips, criticisms, contributions, obits, and club-related questions are welcomed. Write, text or call Steve Dzubay at #715-821-7537 or stevendzubay@gmail.com. A special thanks to Deb Cernohous for her proof-reading assistance.

Clubhouse, grounds get seasonal spruce-up during Sept. 21 work day



Clockwise from upper left, Josh Lanoux, a club employee and St. Croix Central Trap Team member, coaches Axel Fanning on the art of sign-painting. Bennett Andrea, left, and Caleb Johnson join Dean Andrea in filling, shaping and seeding a stretch between the clubhouse and shed on Saturday, Sept. 21st. The landscaping helped to negate a trip hazard (above). John Pietenpol, David Danielson. Ross Van-overbeke and Eli Klumb position old silo staves in a newly hewn trench on the downslope side of the 200-yard range trail. The vertical border should mitigate run-off from the wooded hillside during heavy rains. Rose Pechacek cleans up remnants of Hostas and other perennials along the east wall of the clubhouse. Lower left, Dave Woltman and Grace Albarado wielded a roller and brush to spruce up the partition near Trap House 1. Volunteers, from left Jamison Schultz, Josh Lanoux, Liam Boyle, Ella Janski, Ed Gibb and Dan Herum spot topsoil in a low area of the new property.



Members lost

Ron L. Wilson, 84, a longtime RFSC member and avid trap-shooter, died Sept. 15, 2024 at home with his family. He was 84.

Ronald was born in Mishawaka, Indiana, in 1940. He married his high school sweetheart, Margaret Wilson in 1961. The couple had three children, Brian, Tyler, and Brooke, and celebrated 63 years together in July.

Ron graduated from Western Michigan University in 1966 earning his BS and MA degrees. He earned his PhD from Wyoming University. He taught at Delta College in Michigan, Nevada, and Northern Community College in Elko, Nevada, before joining UW-River Falls in 1976 where he served as a professor of physics until his retirement in 2003.

Ron loved sailing, boating, trap shooting, fishing, hunting, and woodworking.

Ron is survived by his wife of 63 years, Margaret; son, Tyler (Laurie) Wilson of Laramie, WY; daughter, Brooke (Dave) Secord of Paris, TX; sisters, Patricia "Diann" (Ted) Wallace of Columbia City, Indiana, and Sue (Bob) Jones of La Grange, Indiana; seven grandchildren, and seven great grandchildren.

A celebration of Ron's life was held Saturday, Sept. 21 at Bakken-Young Funeral & Cremation Services, River Falls.

A photo album reflecting Ron's life can be viewed here: <https://bakken-young.com/ronald-wilson-phd-09-15-2024/>



Ron Wilson



Carcass collection underway

WDNR employees Mark Worth, Hanna Stanley and Mitch Feyereisen secure a liner on the Murtha Sanitation roll-off deployed Nov. 5th near the River Falls Wastewater Treatment gate. The RFSC contributes \$500 to sponsor the effort and WDNR picks up remaining costs — including a second roll-off, if needed. Other area collection sites include Plummer Concrete, east of Ellsworth on Hwy. 10; the WDNR Service Center at Baldwin; and the WDNR office on Hwy. 29 on the west side of Menomonie.

Board briefs

DIRECTORS APPROVED A REQUEST by Josh Knudson, instructor with the recently-held Appleseed program, requested reserving the RFSC range for next year's sessions, April 21-22, and Oct. 4-5, 2025.

Knudson also volunteered to install a new eye-bolt in one of the concrete abutments to accommodate ropes that support a snow fence backstop at 25 yards for young shooters. The club will provide the materials.

He also asked feedback on the recent event, noting that it was a first experience for several younger instructors. Rangemaster Ed Gibb complimented the participants as having been "respectful" in the clubhouse during lunch. Chief Instructor Kevin Larson, who also leads 4-H shooting sports, noted that he's heard "high praise" for instructors who've gained experience through the Appleseed program.

Project Appleseed is a national non-profit program that teaches the fundamentals of rifle and pistol marksmanship combined with the storytelling of American Revolutionary War history. Events are family friendly and designed for all ages and experience levels. <https://appleseedinfo.org/about/>

DISCUSSION REKINDLED ABOUT the board's September decision to skip a fundraising banquet in 2025. In response to comments indicating some members didn't attend because there wasn't a clear focus for the fundraising needs, the board decided that it will include the current list of possible club improvements being discussed in the newsletter to better keep members up on what is being discussed. Current improvements/purchases suggested include: a pergola or shelter over trap area picnic tables; a sun-rain-wind side shelter for the trap scoring stands; a new or used skid-steer for groundskeeping, work days, snow-removal and unloading semi-trailers; refurbish the clubhouse floor with an epoxy coating; the addition of skeet houses to add a new target-shooting option, different target holders for the target shooting ranges. Once a project has been reviewed and approved it will be noted in the next newsletter. If members have suggestions on possible improvements/purchases they would like to see take place please bring them to the board's attention.

J & S LAWCARE WILL NO LONGER provide mowing services to the club in 2025, so the board is inviting bids for a service or individual to mow the clubhouse and west property areas periodically.

Bear mauling continued from page 1

In looking back Ryan now recognized the time and place where they were tracking was perfect for an ambush. The land had been clear-cut two years ago and was covered in tall grass that was thick as hair. There were saplings mixed in with the tall oak trees. It had grown dark, and they needed headlamps and flashlights to navigate. Ryan believes the bear could hear, smell, and even see them as they approached. He saw the bear under a tree just before it charged.

"It looked like a big cat ready to pounce." And that's what it did.

As the bear charged toward him, Ryan called out to Owen who was behind him. Ryan was able to unholster his pistol and got off several shots, emptying the weapon, but he missed. "I've never practiced shooting any of my pistols from the hip ... I wish I would have had the time to pull up and look down the sights."

The bear lunged, knocked him to the ground, bit into his right leg and started to violently shake him.

"The best way I can describe how he was shaking me is a Labrador shaking a rope bone. And I was the rope bone."

Ryan used his now empty pistol to strike at the bear, but it had no effect. "I felt like I was punching a brick wall."

Ryan turned his pistol so he could strike at the bear with greater force by using the maga-

zine well. He started banging the bear behind the ear and it finally released his leg, but then it lunged for his face. "That's when I instinctively put my right arm up."

To protect his face, Ryan shoved his arm into the bear's mouth. The bear bit down hard and Ryan heard the crunch of bone. His immediate thought was his arm was broken, and he'd be unable to fight any longer.

Ryan recalled the bear on top of him, growling and snarling and in his mind at least, he yelled out to Owen. "I don't know if it was getting it out of my mouth or not, but I was trying to say -- 'Shoot it! Shoot it!'"

From there, Ryan describes what is not an uncommon experience in critical life and death encounters. "Everything was in slow motion. I heard the (rifle) reports, I seen the muzzle flash. There was a split-second thought of -- 'I hope his aim is there.'"

Owen, armed with a 350 Legend semi-automatic rifle, took one shot as the bear charged, but the gun malfunctioned and jammed. As the bear mauled his dad, Owen had the presence of mind to clear the jam, reacquire his target and shoot again. Owen did not put the rifle to his shoulder. Instead, he held the gun level at his hip and shot. This time, his shot was true and fatal. Ryan felt the bullet strike the bear and the attack stopped. Ryan was able to shove the dead bear off.

Ryan had sustained significant injuries to his leg, arm, and face. The facial wounds were bleeding heavily, and he needed medical attention. Ryan estimated they were one-quarter mile into the woods.

"The only thing I had with a compass on it was my phone, but my facial recognition wouldn't pick up my face. I tried to punch in my code but that wouldn't work" due to blood on his hands and phone.

Ryan said his son spoke very calmly. "Dad, give me your phone. He typed in the code, pulled up the compass and they were able to walk out and back to the bear stand.

Ryan had planned to drive himself to the Grantsburg hospital, but Owen told him he couldn't in his condition, instead calling a neighbor who came and offered to drive. After calling 9-1-1, the dispatcher directed them to meet an ambulance in a Siren bank parking lot.

Ryan said emergency room personnel did a wonderful job of taking care of his injuries. Nurses said the only animal bites they'd cared for in the past were inflicted by a bobcat and a llama. Ryan received 23 stitches in his cheek along with seven puncture wounds to his arm and another cut in need of stitching.

Beierman works as a business agent for Teamsters Local 120 in Blaine, Minn.

RIVER FALLS SPORTSMEN'S CLUB

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Banquet follow-through

St. Croix Central trap team members "paid it forward" on their donation of four hours of yard work purchased at auction by Ben & Lori Gaus during the Sept. __ club fund-raiser banquet. The group followed through on Nov. 2nd with a gang of kids and adults to spruce-up the grounds near their Troy Township home. The Gaus' rewarded the volunteers with hot pizzas from their backyard brick oven. Photo provided by Brad Cran.

RANGE FACILITIES ARE OPEN TO MEMBERS 365 DAYS PER YEAR. WE ONLY REQUIRE THAT YOU OBSERVE POSTED SHOOTING HOURS AS FOLLOWS:

WEEKDAYS FROM: 9 AM TO 8 PM

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY FROM: 9 AM TO 8 PM

THE CLUBHOUSE IS ONLY OPEN DURING TRAP LEAGUE HOURS (JANUARY TO OCTOBER), WHICH ARE AS FOLLOWS:

TUESDAY 5 PM – 9 PM SUMMER, AND FALL TRAP LEAGUE

WEDNESDAY 5 PM – 9 PM SUMMER TRAP LEAGUE

SUNDAY 11 AM – 3 PM WINTER, SUMMER, AND FALL TRAP LEAGUE

WWW.RIVERFALLSSPORTSMENSClub.COM/